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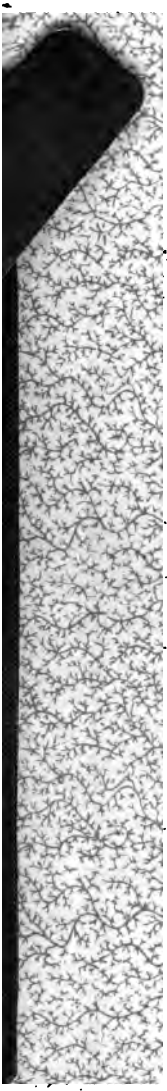

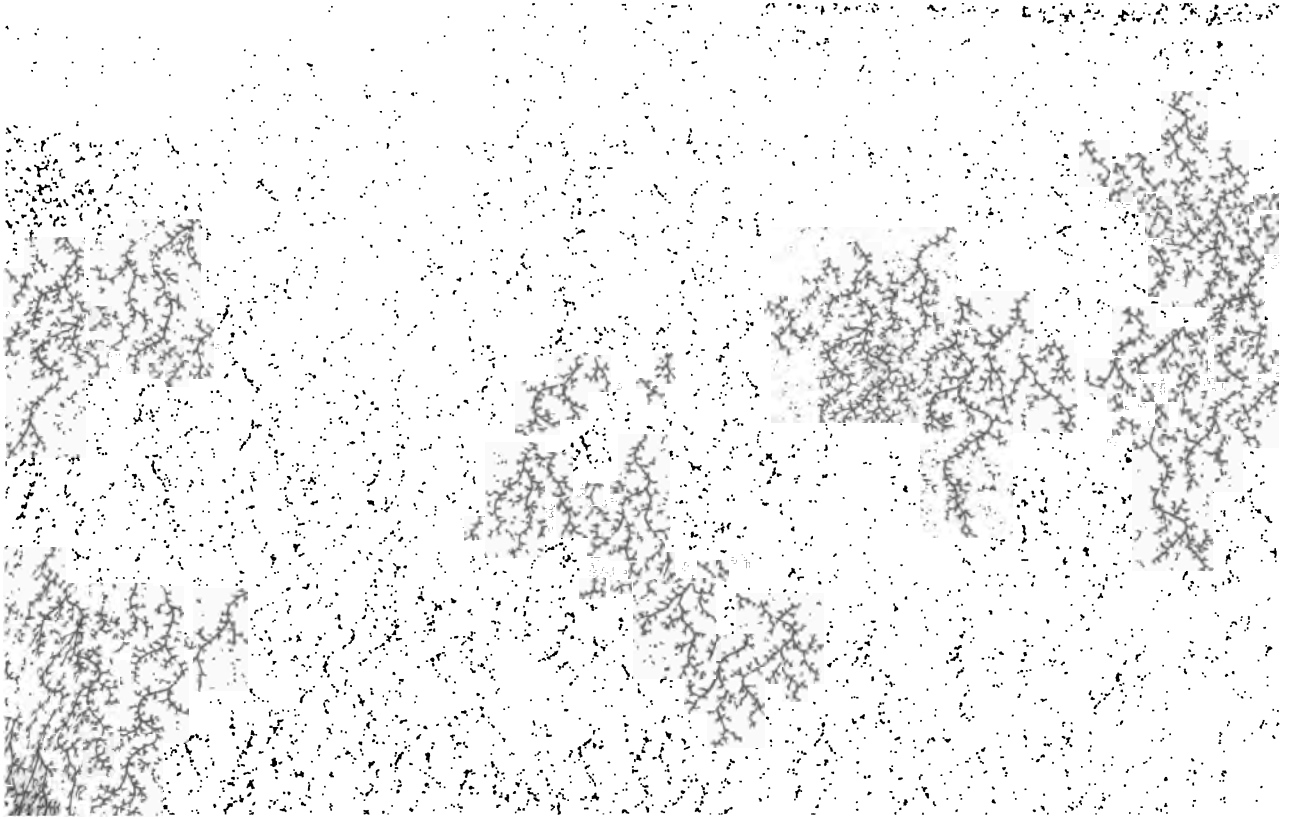

The spiritual Body.

Sonn. 37. 38. 39.
42. 48. 49
96. 97. 98.

THE

MASTER'S FIELD:

A Series of Sonnets.

NEW YORK PUBLIC

BY

JOHN CHARLES EARLE, B.A.

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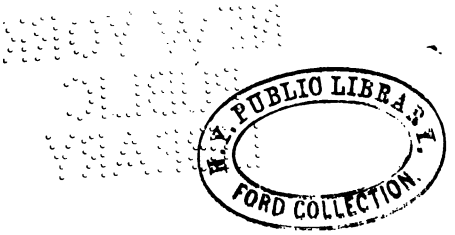

PREFACE.

HAVING chosen the sonnet in this volume as the chief medium for the expression of thought, I am led to say a few words on the structure of that peculiar form of composition. Though much has been written about it lately, little is understood. With the exception of Mr. Charles Tomlinson's work on the Sonnet, it is difficult to find anything orthodox. Most writers on it begin by saying that its rules are rigid, and that they ought to be observed, and end by relaxing all their obligations, and representing the strict observance of them as a mere literary superstition. I cannot agree with them in this respect; but believe that if the sonnet be selected at all as a "mode of the lyre," it ought to conform to the types left us by the Italian masters of this branch of art. The variations from the strict models, which may be reduced to three, are rare among them, and yet sufficiently numerous to satisfy any reasonable demand for freedom from restraint. The sonnet-writer who indulges a licence for which he can find no sanction in Petrarch, Michael Angelo, Tasso, Ariosto, and Vittoria Colonna, forfeits, in so far as he transgresses, the claim to skilful artisanship.

In saying this, I am in a degree—but in a slight degree only—condemning myself. When I first began to write sonnets, I did not see as clearly, as I saw soon afterwards, that the actual poetry of the composition depends very much on its structural perfection. Any one who compares the "Sonetti" of Petrarch with the "Canzoni" will see how rigid rules and multiplied rhymes may, in some hands, increase instead of diminish beauty and strength. The best sonnets to be found in English, German, and Spanish, conform strictly to the Italian type; they have two sets only of rhyming words in the first eight lines, or major system, and two or three sets only of rhyming words in the tercets.

There is a full stop or decided break at the end of eighth line; and if any variation from this strict type is admitted, it is in the tercets only. These, indeed, are liable to numerous variations in the arrangement when two rhyming words only are employed.

As regards the subjects of my sonnets, I have aspired to embodying in verse a philosophy of human life before and after death, compatible both with science and the most ancient forms of Christianity. The poets of religion in England—the Puritan Milton, the Calvinist Cowper, and the Anglican Keble—had each a theological system in his mind, out of which he constructed his poetry. Will it be accounted presumption if I say that I have followed in the steps of my masters, and in my feeble measure have formed for myself a ground plan? To many, perhaps most, readers my ground will appear to be untenable; yet time has made it to me increasingly sufficient, and on it I have erected all that I have been able to build up, whether in books or periodicals, during the last seventeen years. The abstractions to which I have imparted substance and form will repel some minds; there are others to whom they will appear the fittest and noblest themes of song. I know too well how remote they are from the experiences and sympathies of ordinary readers. It is for this very reason that I cherish them like one who takes a pleasure in visiting secret treasures. In reference to the spiritual body especially, to the doctrine of which I have devoted a separate volume, and to which many of my sonnets and poems refer, I am well aware of the manifold misconstructions to which my words are liable, and the disadvantages under which I present my ideas to the public. I am not, however, on this account shaken in my conviction of their truth, nor doubtful of their ultimate prevalence in the sphere of religious thought and belief. Without it revelation would be incomplete and psychology null. It is a key to many otherwise insoluble problems, and a key which exactly fits the wards of scriptural, ecclesiastical, and scientific requirements.

Many of the following sonnets have already been published in "Catholic Progress," the "Irish Monthly," the "Westminster Gazette," the "Aberystwyth Observer," and the "Kensington News."

J. C. E.

82 LADBROKE GROVE ROAD, LONDON.

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THE MASTER'S FIELD:

A Series of Sonnets.

I.—THE PHILOSOPHY OF CHRIST.

I ASKED the living Fountain of all grace
If I should sing; and He replied to me,
"Some few there are who have not bowed the knee
To idols of the present. They will trace
Some print of My philosophy in thee,
And in their hearts thy system may embrace,
And in the garner of their memory place,
And thou shalt one of Mine own minstrels be.
Yet of that honour grow not overvain;
The cricket on the lawn a hymn can raise
More pure than thine, and in My wake a train
Of lyric poets, prodigal of praise,
Time tuneful progress through creation's plain,
And to their crowns of light what were thy bays?"

II.—FREE DISCUSSION.

WHY wouldst thou close the wholesome lists of thought,
As if the chivalry of mind were o'er
And beavered knights must break a lance no more,
Nor, in the subtlety of strength, be taught
The value of an armour finely wrought
And weapons highly tempered? Thus of yore
Did Christendom extend from shore to shore,
By soul with soul in blest collision brought.
Why fear the conflict upon Scripture ground
If athletes to its truth alike consent
And to the spouse of Christ continue leal?
The energy of faith is not yet spent,
And many guerdon-truths may yet be found
By hearts empanoplied in burnished steel.*

III.—INCARNATION POSSIBLE IN OTHER WORLDS.

HERE only lived and died the Son of God—
Here on this earth? But you have looked on night
And seen it full of stars—star-worlds—so bright,
So grand, and will you tell me that this clod
Alone entombed Emmanuel in the sod,
And yielded Him again to rule in might
Unbounded over all by simple right
Of having here the path of dolours trod?
Nay, rather when I watch the faintest star
Throb in the blue, and know it is a sun
Girdled with planets, satellites, which are
Wondrous as any science has seen run,
I think it too may be some fiery car
In which my Lord a glorious prize has won.

* The rhymes in the tercets of this sonnet are arranged according to the third type of Petrarch and the old Italian sonneteers. See Tomlinson on the Sonnet, pp. 4 and 69.

IV.—PHYSICAL UNION.

We all are brethren, nay, we all are one,
United by the ether we inspire.
The air which kindles in me carbon fire,
When through my heaving bosom it has run,
Flies off for other lives to feed upon,
Incorporates itself with beings higher
And lower than myself, to bring us nigher
Than I had fancied ever could be done.
Thus all are of one breath, all of one blood,
All woven together in a world-wide loom ;
Not merely nurslings of one parent brood,
Not merely plants that in one garden bloom,
But by the breath of nature soft or rude
We mutually each other's parts assume.

V.—THE NEAR DISTANT AND THE FAR NEAR.

How far from us are those who nearest stand !
How near to us are those we never saw !
For, with inverse proportion to the law
Of distances material, the band
Of sympathy and soul-attraction and
Loving communion will often draw
Together spirits like perhaps in flaw
No less than qualities both bright and grand.
You talk your petty scandal, fume and fret
O'er neighbours' faults less flagrant than your own,—
I scarcely hear your vacant, flippant noise,
My thoughts are with some minstrel on a throne
Ethereal, whom in poet-land I met
Long years ago, and found his metres joys.*

* Tercets as in Sonnet II.

VI.—A NEW RANGE.

"WEARY, long weary, of these rocky walls
Of solid facts, I sigh for something new;
No matter really be it false or true,
So I expatiate in its ample halls
And bask in the ideal light that falls
Upon its fresh creations. I eschew
The truth that stagnates. I affect the dew
Of youth and beauty, and obey the calls
Of mountain-heights and condor-haunted peaks,
And panting layers of supernal air,
And pearly hollows which the diver seeks,
And spicy isles, though venomed snakes coil there,
For danger often to my mind bespeaks
A joy that never can be found elsewhere."

VII.—PASSING THE FORD.

No need of Charon and his shadowy boat
To ferry souls across the gulf of hell;
I take it music's breath did never float
So softly o'er the waters, never swell
So deftly o'er a phantom-haunted dell,
As will the soul of man o'erleap the moat
That severs it from where the spirits dwell.
Nor though you hear death's gurgle in the throat,
Must you conclude that difficult and dark
The transit into soul-land. Mind is mind
Continuous. Swifter than the matin lark
It soars and leaves the hollow nest behind,
Or sinks into a region bleak and stark,
Imprisoned in the spirit-body's rind.

VIII.—SCIENCE UNSATISFYING.

NAY, Science, draw me not away from Him
Who only lit thy tiny, fitful spark.
Thou canst not make the thirsting spirit brim
With holy joy, nor guide the mortal ark
Through passion's sea, tempestuous and dark,
Into a peaceful haven. Stern and grim
The universe is to the Christless. Mark
How lorn his steps on Eden's very rim.
The inner man an inner world requires,
The mystic man a mystic system needs.
The soul demands a union with a soul
All-satisfying, and the heart desires
A heart that with it throbs, and even bleeds,
And is of parts—all parts—the living whole.

IX.—A DISMAL PREDICTION.

"I TELL thee, dreamer, thou wilt surely die
Into the dead-life of old nature's force;
And this will be thine immortality—
To follow in her ever-varying course
Where'er she will; to swell the cataract hoarse
Or add a tint to the carnation's dye;
Rush in the loose mane of the Pampas horse;
Lisp in the languid river's lullaby;
Descend in showers; again in vapour rise;
Beat in the pulses of voluptuous spring;
Blaze in the diamond; melt into the skies;
Float on the atmosphere's unwearied wing,
Unconscious of the past; set loose from ties;
No person, and less even than a thing!"

X.—AN INDIGNANT REPLY.

"WHAT! after all my struggle to be free
From earth's dominion, shall I prove her slave,
Washed in her wild and wildly-wandering wave
From shore to shore; and even cease to be?
Shall I not rather triumph over thee,
Material universe? Shall I not brave
Whatever powers destructive thou mayst have,
And dominate o'er land and sky and sea—
Absorb their beauty—to my use compel
Their forces manifold and mystic—know
How infinitely higher 'tis to dwell
Apart, and individually grow
Into the angel type, evolving slow,—
Lord of myself, and lord of thee as well?"

XI.—"A TEACHER COME FROM GOD."

WHEN Thou, dear Lord, didst tread this vale of tears,
Thy heart went forth to meet whoever came
To seek Thee as one sent from higher spheres,
Though of the magnitude of Thy great name
He scarcely dreamed. Enough that with the flame
Of love towards God he burned, that to the seers
Of Israel he listened, and with shame
Reflected on his worse than wasted years.
So even now I often think that they
Who cannot see Thy Godhead, yet receive
Thy witness to a code they should obey,
Thy teaching where indeed they can believe,
Shall count as if they trod the perfect way,
Nor ever 'neath Thy long disfavour grieve.

XII.—"IN EVERY THING GIVE THANKS."

To others Thou hast given praise of men,
Well-earned and minted into showers of gold,
Fruitful of pleasure-fields and flowers untold
Along the path of life, most welcome when
We yearn to make each act of kindness ten,
And plant a *gartenlaube* in the wold,
And foster love in hearts that ne'er grow cold,
And pass at will from home and native glen,
And circles filled by cultured minds and keen,
To southern seas, where softer climates are
And fairer blossoms shiver in the breeze,
And pensive leisure broods o'er every scene :—
Ah, give me something greater, Lord, by far—
To thank Thee that Thou hast *not* given me these.

XIII.—POETRY NOT TO BE DEFINED OR TAUGHT.

GIVE me the delicate thought and touch that lie
Remote from vulgar apprehension's reach,
That when I speak, a something in my speech
May prove the presence of that Poetry
Who is the daughter of the earth and sky,
Whose subtle essence, howsoe'er men preach,
No definition can express or teach
To worshippers' instinctive ear and eye.
Where are they learnt, that delicate touch and thought?
Not in the schools of wisdom or of tears,
Nor on savannahs vast or peaks of snow,
On streams of buoyant pleasure, or in years
Acquiring mental riches as they flow;
They are a natural growth, or they are nought.*

* Tasso has twelve sonnets in which the rhymes of the tercets are arranged as here. See Tomlinson on the Sonnet, p. 8.

XIV.—"COGITO, ERGO SUM."

I HARDLY dare to say as much, Descartes;
I hardly dare to say "*I am*," like thee,
"*Because I think.*" For what is it to be?
Can I have being while in every part,
Seen and unseen, I deviate and start
Upon a new existence? Swift as flee
Moments, I change. E'en my identity
Might yet be lost through some abysmal art.
I rather on the great "I am" depend,
Nor for myself substantial being claim.
From Him I sprung; in Him shall be my end,
If e'er I end. He always is the same,
I never. 'Tis enough for me to tend
Towards being, He my only life and aim.

XV.—THE MOSAIC COSMOGONY.

WHAT do I seek in that Mosaic page
Which tells of man's beginning and the birth
Of sun and stars, and cradling of the earth
In light maternal? Will the sacred sage,
Skilled in the lore of Egypt and his age,
Instruct my mind in science, sow my dearth
With fruitful seed of undisputed worth,
And lend me cosmic truth's unerring gauge?
Nay, rather there I look for higher things—
Some revelation of the world unseen—
Some promise of a Saviour, type and sign
Of spiritual blessings, light divine
Piercing the shadows of this mortal scene,
And circling science' self, like Saturn's rings.*

* Tasso has 26 sonnets, out of 223, in which the tercet rhymes are thus arranged. See Tomlinson on the Sonnet, p. 8.

XVI.—IGNORANCE OF SCRIPTURE.

Abysmal ignorance of the Word of God!
Oh, tell it not in Gath, nor publish it
In Askelon's streets, for it is most unfit
For clergy and the flocks which to their rod
Resort for pastoral succour. Can the clod
Yield any herb so pleasant to be bit,
Or any by which sense and soul are knit
So wholesomely together? Not thus trod
The shepherds of old time, who ranged the hills
And valleys and fair pastures of the Word,
Like Christians of Berea, night and day.
Ah me, how many wander from this way,
And feed their hearts on daintiness absurd,
And quench their thirst from turbid, tainted rills!

XVII.—A CONSEQUENCE OF THE INCARNATION.

God is a Spirit, yet in Christ has God
A bodily existence: He is throned
Above the angels, and His praise intoned
As God incarnate, taking from this sod
The sacred flesh in which He wrought and trod
And suffered for the sinners whom He owned
As brethren, their blood-guiltiness condoned,
And, folded, rules with gentlest pastoral rod.
Yet if He has a body, He has breath—
Relations with the universe He made—
Immediate, intimate relations—air
Ethereal He must breathe, air interplayed
With denser gases circling everywhere
And shoreless waves of mutual life and death.*

* Tercet rhymes as in Sonnet XIII.

XVIII.—CHRISTIAN PANTHEISM.

How many ages have the wise men sought
To reach the unseen essences of things!
For substance still eludes the grasp of thought,
And flies away upon the subtlest wings.
We call in vain; no answer echo brings.
We know not what we are; we have been taught
Lies from our childhood; mystery enrings
Existences. What are they? They are nought.
Systems on systems every moment rise;
Systems on systems every moment fall
Throughout the limitless expanse of skies.
But not in them, nor in the worms that crawl
Upon them, any real being lies
Excepting God, Who is their all in all.

XIX.—POETIC INSPIRATIONS OF SCIENCE.

Not in the images of Hebrew seers,
Nor in colossal tombs of Egypt's kings,
Nor in Olympus, though the "Iliad" brings
Its stories fresh as ever to our ears,
Nor in the Roman and Sicilian peers
Of Grecia's elder minstrels, nor in things
Wrought valiantly by knights in crowded rings
Of high-born dames and gallant cavaliers,
Nor in the dawn of science' mental day,
When new worlds burst upon De Gama's sight
And travellers were envied and admired,—
But in th' apocalypse of science' light
The poet rather seeks to be inspired,
And with harmonious truth his audience sway.*

* Tercets as in Sonnet XIII.

XX.—ALL, YET NOT ALL.

"And is this all—the splendour of the sky
At midnight blazing with its sun-star fires,
Each full of loveliness and mystery—
Each quickening many unfulfilled desires—
Each musical in many separate choirs,
And beauteous, howsoever near you spy,
Without a flaw? And yet my heart aspires
To something more, and 'Is this all?' I sigh."
"Yes, this is all; but in its boundless bound
Are various worlds, to various visions clear.
You see one phase of matter only. Mind
Is here in numberless conditions found.
Without collision sphere revolves in sphere,
And God herein has all His works combined."

XXI.—CONTINUOUS REVELATION.

You think God's revelation at an end?
It never ends; no, never. Every mind
Which graciously He visits to unblind
Beholds a new apocalypse extend
Above him and around. His nearest friend
And likest to himself of all mankind
Sees otherwise, and, in his soul combined,
Pictures in other shapes and colours blend.
In none the heavenly vision was the same
Precisely with the visions seen before:
To none the gentle Breath creative came
Dispensing the same measure of the store
Of gifts, but was in each a kindling flame
Of light on light—of God known more and more.

XXII.—INSENSATE PRAYER.

WHAT mockery to pray to be content !
Insensate prayer, enough to make a host
Of angels bending o'er the battlement
Of spirit-fortresses along the coast
Of heaven laugh at man and all his boast
Of piety ! Content that God has sent
His Son to be your guest and you His host,
For ever in a firm alliance blent !
Content, forsooth ! in Him possessing all
That mortal or immortal can possess—
Life and its issues—not a hair to fall
Without His bidding to Whom nought is small,
Who is the plenitude of love's excess :
Whole systems might be well content with less.

XXIII.—INQUISITORS.

THE mild-eyed murder in a bigot's eye,
Who from the smiling heaven would call down fire,
Is to me more repulsive than the ire
Of mob or monarch wrought to tyranny
By real or fancied wrongs. The darkest dye
Of guilt must stain the miscreants who aspire
To vengeance in the name of mercy's Sire
And slaughter muffled in hypocrisy—
Slaying within themselves the life of grace,
Slaying the brethren they cannot persuade,
And branding memories time will ne'er efface
In generations yet to come, and made
In God's own image, of a sanguine race
Who prayed for blessing on a hangman's trade.

XXIV.—"EVERY MOUTH SHALL BE STOPPED."—I.

THE lightning is as useful as the moon,
Shedding her dreamy lustre on the lake:
The furious floods no less than the lagoon
For living creatures' general welfare make.
It matters not what hateful thing you take,
It has its virtues manifold, and soon
Upon the pondering mind its use will break,
And pest and poison prove a precious boon.
Thus misery and wrong, though these abound
As here, it may be, otherwhere, through all
The star-besprinkled universe, to sound
And God-revering reason will recall
No thought rebellious, even though their round
Should never, never cease to rise and fall.

XXV.—"EVERY MOUTH SHALL BE STOPPED."—II.

SUPPOSE that all were true you say of hell:
Suppose it is not and it ne'er can be:
Yet evil reigns, and with it misery
And torture manifold. Nor does it dwell
Here only, nor exert its baneful spell
On man alone. Perhaps no world we see,
Nor any world in all immensity,
But has some bitter fruits of sin as well.
Hence evil is wherever good is known:
And if the universe should last for ever—
Your problem is not narrowed, but has grown
Gigantic and unending—never, never
Will evil cease to circle round the throne
Of God, nor wholly from creation sever.

XXVI.—BOASTING EXCLUDED.

THERE is a point in distance far away
Where all the stars that in the heart of night
Throb with the pulses of a living light
Will into one agglomerate, and display
No sign of separate orbits, shed one ray
On the fixed gaze of higher power of sight
Than ever yet has pierced the infinite,
Twinkle, and in recurrent dawn decay.
Yet man, vain man, will boast as if he had
A something he could really call his own,
Knows not that to be proud is to be mad,
Thinks not that ere his life-spark is outblown
New systems will arise in glory clad
Or perish, which for countless ages shone.

XXVII.—THE VULGAR GREAT.

WHY is it that so many born for fame
So little in their lifetime earned of praise,
Ate the hard crusts of poverty and shame,
To die on straw, instead of crowned with bays,
Or missed the guerdon in some other ways,
Encountering everywhere neglect and shame,—
For 'tis the vulgar great the vulgar raise,
And leave the really great without a name?
Ah, why was this? Had justice left the sky?
Or was it only twofold grace supplied
To those whom the good Spirit set on high
Above their fellows? Did they pine and sigh
Because He loved to keep them at His side,
Nor let them fall through vanity and pride?

XXVIII.—A RECOLLECTION.

O Moon, delicious dreams were mine that hour
Of hours when thou didst point my silvered way
Along the rocky ledges, and make day
Of midnight in the plenitude of power,
And mingle dews with odours, and embower
The earth in magic splendour. What a ray
Shot from thy bow upon the waters lay
Bathing the feet of that time-hallowed tower!
O Moon, thou sawest I was not alone;
And if thy great heart beateth not in vain,
And if thou markest pleasures not thine own
To make them thine, that night the mingled tone
Of lovers' voices reached thy argent throne,
And cheered thy course across the azure plain.

XXIX.—EVERLASTING TIME.

O Time, they tell me that thou too wilt die,
And hide thy venerable head in dust—
The dust of all creation. But I must
Regard their doctrine as a special lie—
Figment of minds that never mounted high—
And fix in everlasting Time my trust.
The wheels of planets here and there may rust,
And suns and moons be blotted from the sky;
But, into other forms resolved, will they
Their courses through the endless æons take;
And live and die again, and sleep and wake;
And still the Lord His glory will display
In rolling spheres, and Time, e'en as to-day,
Its shadow on the eternal dial make.

XXX.—ISLAM'S CRY FOR HELP.

HELP for the Sultan! haste, the Prophet fails!
The clammy dews of death are on the face
Of Islam, and the Crescent wanes apace
Before the Cross of Constantine. It pales
In Europe's light. Waft hither, British sails,
Help for the gasping Mussulman. Your race
Of greed and glory will incur disgrace
If he should perish. Look, then, to your bales.
Strengthen the feeble hands of Istamboul,
And guard her coasts with ironclads, and let
Her Zaptiehs still the hated Giaour control;
Support each tottering mosque and minaret,
That she may rend Bulgaria's heart and soul,
And stock with Christian maids her harems yet.

July 1876.

XXXI.—THE LANGUAGE OF ANGELS.

THEIR lips were music, and their voice was light;
They had a language proper to their kind;
Each ardent countenance with thought was dight,
And spoke at once to ear and eye and mind,
Leaving in me imperfect trace behind
Of word-looks far too wonderful. So bright
The utterances of love and truth, I find
No power within to gauge that infinite.
Their words expressed in moments what in hours
Sages and senators could not make plain.
And oh, to rest in those supernal bowers
Of wisdom once for one brief while again,
To list the harmonies and watch the showers
Of talk that from the lips of angels rain!

XXXII.—"HE WILL YET DELIVER."

"FAINTING with thirst—the desert round—I lay,
When, lo! fresh water, gurgling, hove the sand:—
Sinking, surf-worn, full half a league from land,
A timely mainmast floated in my way:—
A moment more I was the were-wolf's prey,
When whizzed a bullet from a friendly hand
And choked his greed. For I was ne'er unmanned
So far as to forget some prayer to say
To Him before Whose will all creatures bow.
Whatever faith is mine I have it hence—
He has withdrawn me from the perilous brow
Of gulfs and earthslips—He, and not my sense—
Nor after these things will He leave me now,
Nor fail to smite my foes with impotence."

XXXIII.—HELL PREFERRED.—I.

LET no man say the wicked into hell
By God are cast. Though this is, doubtless, true,
But of the truth part only. They as well
Choose to be there. They cannot bear the view
Of heavenly life and kindly service due
To beings in whom thoughtful virtues dwell.
The arts of choral praise they never knew,
Nor can or would a hallelujah swell.
They have a resolute preference for ill,
A stern avoidance of the ways of grace.
The groves of Paradise their nostrils fill
With stench; they fain would shrink into that place
Where all is fetid, and the perverse will
Finds plenteous objects of a morbid chase.

XXXIV.—HELL PREFERRED.—II.

O Love supreme, Who gavest man free will
To raise him higher in the moral scale,
Thou canst not be the author of an ill,
Thou canst not for one moment tire or fail
In love's administration! Therefore, hail
The empire of Thy love, though legions fill
The pits of hell, nor ages can avail
To loose the captives or their rage to still.
For never one was cast therein by Thee,
Nor ever one endured the scorching flame
But by his own free choice. This destiny
Was his own work; and if at last he came
Into that place of torment, none but he
Was cause, and none but he may bear the blame.

XXXV.—THE NARROW LIMITS OF THE HOLY LAND.

"Oh, what a narrow strip of land is here!
Mount Ephraim or Gilboa let us climb,
And o'er the fertile levels gaze, sublime
In thought and rapture—lifted like a seer:
Or if the view from Tabor be more dear,
Behold on either hand, or in the prime
Of morning or the golden vesper time,
Both Jordan and the Western Deep appear."
"The Land of Israel is small to thee,—
It was not so to Him Who through it trod,
Seeking its wayward tribes from sin to free
And gather in the bosom of their God!
For small and great to Him alike must be
Who, though on earth, rules all things by His nod."

XXXVI.

THE IGNEOUS GLOBE A FIGURE OF THE NATURAL MAN.

A CRUST that floats upon a sea of fire—
Such is the earth. Bear witness Hecla's flame
And the dread shuddering of our mother's frame
When from beneath the billows boil in ire.
No southern isles that listen to the choir
Of lisping waves and winged warbler's tame
But sometime through the fierce ordeal came
And sometime will succumb to forces dire.
And what were man, if left without the aid
Of Heaven, but a self-consuming mass,
Corrupt and igneous, though overlaid
With patch and plot of flower-enamelled grass?
The fire of hell within would be unstayed,
Would every barrier break and overpass.

XXXVII.—WAKING FROM DEATH-SLEEP.

"WHERE am I now? What is this strange surrounding?
The bitter pangs of death at last are o'er.
The turbulent flood has cast me on a shore
Where light and peace on every side are bounding
My view, and borne on ether waves is sounding
Such music as I heard once—twice—before
In yonder vale of tears, then heard no more.
Yet scarce my spirit-feet can feel their grounding.
I know not if I walk or rest or fly.
I know not if I breathe or dream or wake.
Is God within me? Are His angels nigh?
Is this the spirit-body? Can I make
The sacred sign as in the days gone by?
And is it thus the heavenly mornings break?"

XXXVIII.—THE GUARDIAN ANGEL (*continued from the last*).

"AND is it thus? Bright being, who art thou
That bendest over me with golden wings?
I never saw thy radiant face till now,
And yet that piercing glance to memory brings
Impressions half forgotten here of things
Terrestrial, when my fevered, furrowed brow
Was cooled by thy sweet overshadowings
And prompted to renew my chrismal vow.
Speak, guardian angel, speak, and let me learn
Of thee the language of this blest abode,
That I may lisp the thoughts which in me burn,
And burst at length into some grateful ode;
Or school me still in suffering till I earn
The right to sing by sorrow's self bestow'd."

XXXIX.—THE REPLY (*continued from the last*).

"THE Master Whom I serve has bid me spread
My pinions o'er thy new-developed frame,
For thou hast trod the path by which He came
Victorious, with His precious thorn-crowned head,
Through terror-stricken regions of the dead;
And thou hast borne the cross, the nails, the shame,
And many languid souls with words of flame
To energy and truth and conquest led.
And wilt thou learn the language of the skies
And commune with the sages, saints, who fill
The stellar schools beneath us and above?
It was for this I watched thee angel-wise
Throughout thy lifelong conflict. Trust me still:
A guardian angel does not lose his love."

XL.—SOPHIA-WORSHIP.

SOPHIA, mother, mistress, matron, maid,
Bride of my being, passion of my youth,
Of whom I learned the poetry of truth,
And unto whom my fondest vows were made,
If thou dost speak in aught that I have said,
Take what thou gavest: it is thine in sooth;
And I have learned it in the schools of ruth,
Whereon the pillars of thy house are staid.
We worship thee, Sophia, day by day,
And thee alone must worship to the end;
The Laura true, the Beatrice art thou
For whom the poets wreathe their crowns of bay,
Thine image worship in some mortal friend,
And unto thee the while adoring bow.

XLI.—SPONTANEOUS GENERATION.

WHEN in the lowest strata I explore
The traces of the earliest things that grew
On earth or on the fertile ocean floor—
Matured their beauty and evolved anew
An endless progeny; and when I view
The very slime and sandhill yield a store
Of vegetation—cypris, annelid too,
Bursting through life's inexplicable door;—
When motion, heat, seem vital in effect,
And of themselves quite equal to the task
Of new creations with new wisdom rife,
I cannot half the genesis inspect,
But "Is the world so full of God," I ask,
"That matter's self must needs run o'er with life?"

XLII.—THE SPIRIT-BODY AND THE GLORIFIED-BODY ONE.

WHEN Grace has rolled back Nature's swollen tide,
And spread the waters of salvation o'er
The renovated soul from shore to shore,
The spirit-body *is* the glorified.
The glory is the supplement supplied
To that ethereal covering which before
And after death increases more and more
In likeness to the form of Him Who died
To ransom human nature from its sin.
And he who lives and dies estranged from grace
Is ever less and less like Him Whose face,
Once marred, is now refulgent in a place
Of spiritual brightness. Oh, the race,
That ends in being like the Lord, to win!

XLIII.—GOD IS LOVE.—I.

No, never since His creatures measured time
By shadows of the sliding sun has He,
Whose name is Love, known wrath or enmity,
Avenged or cursed His children for their crime,
Nor banished them to any fiery clime,
Nor turned His face away, nor ceased to see
Their sorrow, nor one moment failed to be
Of love the fulness, the unclouded prime.
And He has made and ordered all for good,
And cannot, though omnipotent, transgress
The laws of His own order. If He could
Make all men happy—types of loveliness—
Your God by you is little understood
If you can think He could or would do less.

XLIV.—GOD IS LOVE.—II.

"Is then the fount of grace not in His hands?
Can He not point the healing tide where'er
He will, and o'er the conscience hard and bare
Diffuse the waves of life? Can any sands
Resist His fertilising power? What bands
And ribs of fortress mountain-heights could dare
Defiance to His influx, and declare
Perpetual war against His just commands?"—
Thus argue purblind mortals—thus reject
The light of reason. Has the gracious Spring
No laws eternal which control its flow?
Must it no moral ordering respect?
Can it conjoin with each repulsive thing
That to its sweet advances thunders "No!"?

XLV.—MORAL CULTURE.

If sometimes from our failings virtue springs
And in defect perfection can have root,
If germs of vice can yield salubrious fruit
And subject-thoughts from rebels grow to kings,
And serpents soar aloft with seraph wings;
If judgments ripe from wayward fancies shoot,
And by degrees the errant striplings suit
Their aims and ways to high and noble things,—
How sacred must the forms of virtue be,
Each like a new variety of bloom
By culture in the moral garden vast
Raised to the glory of the gardener. See
Thy failings lead thee to no sadder doom
Than sorrow for the follies of the past.

XLVI.—ETERNAL SONSHIP (CHRISTMAS DAY).

O Bethlehem-born, on this Thy natal day
I less than ever would forget that Thou—
Long ere thou deignedst thus Thy head to bow
And all Thy glory in a point display—
Didst reign from everlasting, far away
And near, the Son of God, as Thou art now—
The weight of all the worlds upon Thy brow—
The Man Whom nature and her laws obey,
And have obeyed in the eternal past,
And in the unending future will adore—
The Man-Divine, the Christ, the First and Last.
Ah, let Thy servant ponder more and more
Thy goings forth of old, dear infant, cast
At midnight on the inhospitable floor.

XLVII.—FAME.

If Fame should come at last, will Fame bring peace,
Or anything I had not ere she came?
Some say her odorous breath must fan the flame
Of genius, or its energy will cease,
Or flag in faint attempts at self-release.
So if she come—aye, if—the gracious dame
Shall find a sober welcome. If she claim
Her kisses, and give promise of increase
Of favours, and upon her smiles I dwell
Fondly, and grateful hear her music play,
I shall not be reproachèd by the wise,—
For I shall look beyond her loving eyes,
And through her lips shall hear the Master say,
"Well done, thou good and faithful servant, well!"

XLVIII.

CHRIST IN HIS SPIRITUAL, OR RESURRECTION, BODY.

In this alone could He appear to prove
That He was really risen from the dead,
In this alone confirm what He had said
Of resting ever nigh to those who love
His name; by this alone could He remove
The veil that o'er the spirit-world is spread
And severs it from sense. By this He led
Faith through the sepulchre to fields above,
And showed us how the substance of the soul
Preserves the semblance of its earthly frame,
And is with it the same and not the same,
And can at will o'ershade its blinding flame,
And many novel gifts and powers control
That all may see and know from whence it came.

XLIX.—TO —— WITH "THE SPIRITUAL BODY."

Will it find favour in your eyes, dear sir,
This speculation on a theme sublime
Which I have cherished in my heart long time,
And can no longer earth? It needs must stir,
Though many will maintain I gravely err,
And for the matter's sake will flout the rhyme.
But you that, like a tropic creeper, climb,
All flower and leaf and tendril, spike and bur,
Around the tree of life, and overlook
The rank weeds and dank grasses at its base,
You will not scan with scornful glance the book
That for the body claims transforming grace,
Angelic rarity, a human look,
Life out of death, light, ether, form, and space.

L.—"LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS."

WIDE fields of corn along the valleys spread;
The rain and dews mature the swelling vine;
I see the Lord is multiplying bread;
I see Him turning water into wine;
I see Him working all the works divine
He wrought when Salemward His steps were led;
The selfsame miracles around Him shine;
He feeds the famished; He revives the dead;
He pours the flood of light on darkened eyes;
He chases tears, diseases, fiends away;
His throne is raised upon these orient skies;
His footstool is the pave whereon we pray.
Ah, tell me not of Christ in Paradise,
For He is all around us here to-day."

LI.—THE NEW TURKISH CONSTITUTION.

BEHOLD the Crescent grown to a full moon—
A sudden blaze of splendour fills the sky—
Perhaps too sudden; perhaps it flares too soon
Its dazzling promise on the wondering eye,
And is a meteor-flame that passes by.
Yet might it last, in sooth no greater boon
Could on the East be showered from on high
Nor unto louder praise the West attune.
When he who sits upon the Caliphs' throne
Bids freedom welcome, welcomes e'en the Cross,
Nor counts the Press a curse, nor Parliaments dross,
When Viziers for past "horrors" would atone
By such reforms, we stand amazed, and own
The Asian gates to Christ are open thrown.

Christmas Day, 1876.

LII.—SOPHIA'S BEAUTY.

SUCH beauty, O Sophia, such as thine
Nor men nor angels ever saw before,
Nor trembled in a presence so divine,
Nor counted attributes so glorious o'er:
Thy home the ether and the starry floor
Of heaven and earth beneath thy feet. Oh, twine
Around thy brows whatever sea or shore
Has loveliest, for the wreath entire is thine.
And I will sit, if deep emotions let
My footsteps pause, and watch thy wondrous ways,
And hear thy whispers guide me into love.
Eternal youth with endless length of days
Are thine; and if thou hast not conquered yet
My heart of hearts, it shall be thine above.

LIII.

THE TRIFLES THAT MAKE THE SUM OF HUMAN THINGS.

I DREAM that I have schooled my heart to see
All things in God. Round fly the dusty hours
Of daily life's routine, and as they flee
My lofty lessons lose their mystic powers,
And I am vexed with trifles, stung with pain
A beast would bear with patience, and forget
These are but parts of a well-ordered train
Of trials in my path divinely set.
Break up my vision, Lord, that I may spy
The details of Thy providence, and see
Thy will whatever cloudlets blur the sky,
Thy love whatever the annoyance be,
And track things instantly, both great and small,
To Thee, as the one fountain of them all.*

* Metre that of Shakespeare's Sonnets.

LIV.—"O LORD, IN THEE HAVE I TRUSTED."

BEHOLD the bleeding victim of Thy love,
The heart which Thou Thyself indeed hast torn;
Behold the wandering sheep whom Thou hast shorn
When winter's winds in freezing currents move.
Such is the pitifulness which above
They magnify who in the gates of morn
Blow trumps of praise! But I am all forlorn,
Nor any vaunted sweets of sadness prove.
And yet I will not question Thou art wise,
Nor dream that Thou hast passions or canst take
A pleasure in my anguish. Thou wilt rise
And more than wonted reparation make,
My Sun, my all. Though darker grow the skies,
They darken only for Thy mercy's sake.

LV.—THE DAYSTAR SLOW TO SHINE.

CAN they who really in their hearts believe
They have a body which the world denies—
A spiritual substance—ears and eyes
Ethereal—which both mind and matter weave
In unison and destine to retrieve
The loss of that which Death will make his prize—
A body which shall enter Paradise
Or rove the wastes where godless spirits grieve,—
Can they, I ask, in whom a truth so grand
Has taken root crouch idle and supine,
Nor into one their scattered force combine
To spread that gospel through the sceptic land?
Oh, saddening fact and hard to understand,
The Daystar risen, yet so slow to shine!

LVI.—THE BREAKING UP OF THE CONFERENCE.

LET it break up! for issues are at stake
Too vast for it to handle. On the wall
The fiery Mene, Tekel, speaks the fall
Of Mahomet's empire. Therefore wake, oh, wake,
Crusading sword, the destined vengeance take,
And smite the Moslem's throne, though proud and tall,
And free the Turk from the Multeka's thrall,
The Mollah's spell, and Mufti's bruise and break!
And we will stand aside. But, oh, thou Bear
Who ravenest southward, should thine ancient greed
Incite thee to uproot the chartered flower
Of Britain-planted peace and freedom, there
Her resolute hosts shall meet thee, and at need
Arrest thy rampant inroads in an hour!

LVII.—PRIDE.

INVITE the venomous asp-like Egypt's queen,
Or with the scorpion brood of Barbary play;
Lie down in wards where the plague-stricken lay;
Or learn in Tonquin waters deep and green
How jagged are a shark's teeth and how keen;
Mix henbane with thy food; or day by day
Drug down thy sense with opiates, and delay
The blood's quick current till thy flesh is lean;
Or blind thine eyes with weeping; fret thy skin
To sores that will not heal, and bare thy breast
To freezing winds, or stay thy feet within
And die of sorrow, loss, and pain combined;—
But let not Pride, the serpent, lift his crest
And lance his stings in thine immortal mind.

LVIII.—MYCERINUS.

"I WILL make darkness brighter than the morn,"
The King of Egypt cried: "The groves and streams
Shall shine with lamps innumerous. The gleams
Of pleasure's glowing face shall laugh to scorn
The lying oracle. The harp and horn
Shall chase away our wonted sleep and dreams
Till midnight, banqueted and rose-crown'd, seems
Another day for Mycerinus born,
My six years shall be twelve." Thus mortals who
Insatiate multiply supreme delights,
And wanton maze on maze of error through,
And turn their nights to day, their days to nights,
Would prove the oracles divine untrue
And against God establish human rights.

LIX.—A FLIGHT OF PRAYERS.

I LOOSENED from my breast a flight of prayers,
Which upward soared and lost themselves in cloud
And light. No answer to them was allowed,
But they had melted in the vagrant airs,—
So seemed it; they had perished unawares
Fast bound in snow, their falling, drifting shroud.
And still my feeble heart, with anguish bowed,
Was sinking beneath self-created cares,
When as I walked in heaviness one day
And asked myself, "Ah, whither have they sped,
Those ardent vows of mine?" a sudden ray
Disclosed a myriad angels overhead
Descending on me, and I heard them say,
"We are the winged prayers thou thoughtest dead."

LX.—"THE SECRET OF THE LORD."

WHAT is Thy secret's secret, dearest Lord?
The Master ever has an inner sense
Deep in His wide and central system stored
And hidden from uncouth intelligence.
Ah, could we be e'en now transported hence
Into that depth of wisdom! Be implored,
O Christ! We would not offer Thee incense
Save in the sanctum veiled and golden-doored.
"My secret, frail disciple, it is thine;
Come, lay thy head awhile upon My breast.
Listen, I say not to My voice divine,
But to thine own clear conscience when at rest.
Trust it. The words it speaks to thee are Mine;
They are My secret: hear them and be blest."

LXI.—THE PHOSPHORESCENT SEA.

THROUGH flakes of fiery foam the clipper flew;
In floods of jewel sparks the clipper rolled;
Old Neptune was enriched beyond his due;
That reckless wrecker was one shower of gold
Weltering in mines of opulence untold.
Lo! masts and yards are ringed with violet blue;
In tiny sheaves and fire-founts waves unfold,
And shoals of sharks their glittering paths pursue.
The deep is one vast bridal chamber lit
With lamps of ardent living lovers. How
Supremely just the combination here
Of flashing waves and phosphor-flames that flit.
Ah, what extremes in nature meet! Till now
I knew not fire and water were so near.

LXII.—PRESERVATION AND PROGRESS.

WHATEVER percolates the sieve of time
Leaves what was worth the saving on its way,
The work, the influence, the prose, the rhyme
That ought to live is also sure to stay,
Though long forgotten to revive one day,
And lead an unexpected life sublime
In its reaction 'gainst its own decay,
And to its destined breadth and fruitage climb.
Man is conservative of man; he lets
No portion of his heritage fall through,
But in the storehouse of past ages sets
The wealth he gains successively in new,
And, being thus conservative, he gets
All vantages that are to progress due.

LXIII.—THE RHYTHM OF BEAUTY.

MOMENTS there are of deep and rare delight,
When sight is sound, when silence has a tone
Most musical, a rhythm all her own;
And what we see with harmony is dight,
As if material Beauty must invite
Her sister Power to leave her not alone,
But stir the very breeze about her blown
Into a symphony most exquisite.
Only the budding of the tuberose,
Only the argent throbbing of the stars,
Only the flushing of the crimson east,
When o'er a hundred lands it grows and grows,
Are to me tuneful with mysterious bars
From Beauty's chords spontaneously released.

LXIV.—TO A YOUNG AUTHOR.

HIDE thou thy name. Those bloodhounds of the Press,
If they but scent thee, will be on thy track;
And never yet discerned that venal pack
Between true merit and pretentiousness.
Their praise and blame alike are valueless.
Seek thou to gain the few. Thou wilt not lack
The many in the end. Endure the rack
That laurels may thine injuries redress.
Hate cannot strangle thought. Thought is the soul,
The words the body. Be the body fair—
Type of the inward forces that control
Its shape and movement. O my friend, beware
Of haste and surabundance. Make the whole
Thy very best, then cast on God thy care.

LXV.—THE CAMEL'S PATIENCE.

RAISING his tumid muzzle in the air,
The patient beast, the gentle camel, stands,
And bows his knees, obedient to commands,
The bales and spice of Araby to bear;
While nettles, cassia, thistles, growing there
Suffice for food across those burning sands
Which form for his splay feet the best of lands.
He in the caravan has least of care;
He never shrinks from labour, thirst, or heat:
The smartest whips will never make him groan;
The rockiest pathways never wound his feet;
And if at times you hear a piteous moan
Or growl, 'tis human brutes his load repeat
Till e'en a camel's patience is o'erthrown.

LXVI.—THE DIVINE MIRROR.

I LOOK, and in the mirror see my face,
And yet the features are not really there;
No particle of mine has found a place,
No emanation finer than fine air;
The picture-plate is just as truly bare
Of me and mine as if I could not trace
My likeness on its surface anywhere.
It represents what it can ne'er embrace.
And thus, I think, is all I can behold
A mirror wherein God is darkly seen—
A glass reflecting wisdom without bound
And love whose depth and breadth can ne'er be told.
His lucid image there has ever been,
But He Himself therein can ne'er be found.

LXVII.—THE MEDIÆVAL CHURCH.

WHO taught mankind their proper dignity?
Who broke the galling chains of serf and slave?
Who dared the despot feudal lord to brave
And set the suffering communes round him free?
Who taught the subjects not to bow the knee
To tyrants; toil'd their intellects to save
From abject ignorance, and to woman gave
With man her natural equality?
Who 'stablish'd law and justice; made prevail
The poor man's rights, and taught her monks to sow
And plough and till the thirsty waste? Who bore
The Gospel to the heathen, and with sail
Adventurous made new worlds new life to know?
The Mediæval Church did this and more.

LXVIII.—GRACE WITHOUT BOUND.

DIFFUSIVE and all-penetrating light
Of grace divine, however wide our view
Of things material, spiritual too,
We find thy presence spreading calm and bright
O'er all, illumining the outer night,
And tempering the grief of such as rue
Their misdeeds,—'midst all falses being true,
And facing every wrong with abstract right.
There is no misery beneath the sun,
There is no agony where life can dwell,
Nor any state, or being, time, or place,
Where God has not done all that can be done;
Nor e'en a devil treads the coals of hell
But is an object of celestial grace.

LXIX.—RECOLLECTIONS.

I HAVE within me mountains rosy white,
And valleys where brook music ne'er is still,
And bays which foamless tides with emerald fill,
And cataracts thundering in liquid light,
And faces, forms, most lovely to the sight,
Developing the inward mind and will.
I made them mine. I gazed on them until
They tableted their beauty on my sprite.
But fairer far than fairest countenance,
And dearer than all records of the past,
And keener than an Arab's glittering lance,
And surer than a covenant embrass'd,
Is that Divine, that soul-subduing glance
A Man of Sorrows once upon me cast.

LXX.—FAITH IN MAN LEADING TO FAITH IN GOD.

How do we learn our faith in God? How learn
To lean upon a Saviour's wounded breast?
To find in His dear will that perfect rest
For which the conscious heart must ever yearn?
Our faith was once an infant; it would turn
Instinctive to a mother's arms in quest
Of peace and solace; there alone was blest;
Then in a father's wisdom would discern
A source of strength. And thus reliance grew
From more to more, and chose the worthiest men,
Or those who seemed the worthiest, learning trust
In something higher than itself, and then,
Springing to heaven from a ground of dust,
For nobler stakes a larger venture threw.*

LXXI.—PRAYER STRONGER THAN FATE.

Thou canst not choose thy stars, O man, nor set
Their groups prophetic in the heavens, nor sway
Their courses, nor command the sun to stay
In Gibeon, nor the moon in Ajalon, nor get
Behind the powers which blindly throw a net
Around thy freedom, meeting every way
Thy will impatient. No, thou must obey
Thy fate, and own thou art a prisoner yet.
But if thou wilt, O slave, e'en thou canst make
Thyself superior to thyself, and tear
The toils of destiny, thy dungeon break
To shivers, and compel the stars to share
Thy purposes, and genial influence shake
From golden disks;—such might the might of prayer.

* There are a few examples in Petrarch of the second quatrain running into the first tercet, as in this sonnet. See, for instance,

LXXII.—WELCOMING THE CROSS.

"Oh, had it come in any other wise,
And had it come in any other hour,
And had it not, with look askance and sour,
Withered the pet flowers in my paradise,
And mantled with its envious gloom the skies:
Oh, had it smiled away the transient shower
With light of rainbow blessing, what a dower
Of fruitfulness should I have seen arise!"
Thus argue youthful pilgrims of the Cross,
Unlearned as yet to welcome, howsoe'er
It comes, the precious burden. This is loss
And sorrow, *not* to love the thorny care
That hems our path, to pine for thymy moss
And sunshine sparkling round us everywhere.

LXXIII.

IN THE TIME OF THE EVENING THERE SHALL BE LIGHT.

It is not certain that thine age will grow
To sadness with the lapse of youthful years.
There are whose harvest-time of plenteous tears
Is in the spring: and as the decades flow,
And auburn clusters whiten into snow,
The heart is lighter, and the earth appears
Bright with the radiance of spiritual spheres
And joys of honourable descent from woe;
And heaven and earth unite in golden calm
And enter by the spirit's open door,
And waken many a low-breathing psalm
Untaught by man, and therefore prized the more,
And fill the air around with summer balm,
And ripen precious fruits on branches hoar.

Sonnet CCLXXIX of *La Morte*. The tercets are arranged as in Sonnet XIII.

LXXIV.—SOPHIA'S GOODNESS.

If thou wert only powerful and wise,
Sophia, and not also perfect good;
Wert thou a Juno of the Christian skies,
Not author of the wisdom of the Rood;
If thou hadst ever, rightly understood,
Bestowed on man an arbitrary prize
Of grace and glory; if thy creatures could
Provoke thine anger or produce thy sighs;
If thou wert less than Love itself entire
(Though oft through frailty we may fail to trace
Its purposes, and ways, and means), my face
Would not towards the advent of thy grace
Continually turn, nor I desire
Thy light, if light to me to mine were fire.*

LXXV.—A DEATH-BED.

"Why hast thou left thy goodman's dying bed,
Thou heartless woman?" "Let him die alone:
Why should I echo blasphemy with moan?
I will not hear him any more," she said.
"No; let him be: his hours are numbered:
And now the dreadful secret I will own—
Now that he slides beneath the cold gravestone—
E'en from the first sad night that we were wed,
Just as the heavy minster clock strikes one,
He starts from sleep, and cries: '*I see him there—*
The man on whom my bloody deed was done—
The club-foot pedlar with his grisly hair.
Can the dead wake? Their waking is begun:
See how his bloodshot eyes upon me glare!'"

* Tercets as in Petrarch. In Vita di M. Laura, Sonnet X. LXIII.

LXXVI.—THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE.

THE silent life, the meditative life—
To reach the point where man and seraph meet—
To choose wan-facèd solitude for wife,
And find her chill embraces passing sweet—
Strange visitants from other worlds to greet,
Unmindful of the sea of human strife
Breaking far, far down at the mountain's feet—
The mountain, Dothan-like,* with visions rife:
No wonder souls created for extremes,
High-pitched, at home in star-sweep or abyss,
Discarding dull realities for dreams,
Resolve no glimpse attainable to miss
Of God and heaven as it is, or seems,
And give up all for such a life as this.

LXXVII.—INDEPENDENT MINDS.

STATELY and fair the independent mind,
Not built and furnished by another's will,
Lesson, or influence, action harsh or kind;
Learning of all, yet self-directing still;
Framing its system both of good and ill;
As sage Ulysses, goddess-taught, designed
And wrought with his own augur, adze, and bill
The raft whereon to brave the tempests blind.†
God's blessing on the labour, sure and slow,
With which the mind constructs herself a dome
Of doctrines, precepts, feelings, fancies, so
To dwell apart, without one wish to roam,
Ready and glad the outer courts to show,
But throning conscience in a secret home.

* 2 Kings vi. 13–17, Protestant version. † Odyssey, v. 234 κ.τ.λ.

LXXVIII.—HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS.

"I DO not care to wander in a crowd
Along the dusty highway; I am grown
Dainty of paths, and fain to glide alone
Round lough and bight; to enter in the cloud
Of conder-haunted heights; to rend the shroud
Of morning mist, and listen to the moan
Of night winds in the fir tops, or be blown
About the rocks, where seagulls scream aloud.
Thus rambling far from every beaten track,
As one in soul and substance made to range,
I breathe an air of freedom, and come back
Wiser and better, maybe, for the change—
For beings strange and wondrous ne'er should lack
The aliment of wonderful and strange."

LXXIX.—THE ILLATIVE SENSE.

THE sense illative is the special gift
Of souls poetic, which will often reach
Certain conclusions by a road more swift
Than cumbrous science can attain or teach,
Fearlessly spanning chasm, gulf, and breach,
While feebler spirits halt at every rift,
Falter and stammer in their futile speech,
Nor care to follow out their reasoning's drift.
The mind, assuming what it should assume,
And thence inferring what should be inferred,
Guided by Hope and Genius through the gloom,
Or, trusting to some great Inspirer's word,
Finds its instinctive sense of truth illume
What schoolmen's logic would have dimmed and blurred.*

* See Newman's "Grammar of Assent," p. 338.

LXXX.—PALTRY IDOLS.

A GREAT idolater may seem to claim
A kind of reverence (albeit all
Idols deserve the hammer and the flame,
And what we term great idols are but small);
But when I see a man of culture fall
Before these golden-calf gods, grief and shame
For one whom, if I could, I friend would call,
Consume me, and I urge you in the name
Of reason, if you must th' untrue adore,
Your temple on a higher scale to plan,
To shrine some deities approved of yore,
To find the fairest precedents you can,
And choose at least, if you can do no more,
Some fetish which reminds us you are man.

LXXXI.—POSITIVIST POETRY.

AND shall they wholly die away from earth,
Those grand old strains in which the poets sung
How God was present at Creation's birth,
And o'er its infancy and childhood hung,
And gave mankind a purpose and a tongue—
A history deep in import, high in worth?
Shall poetry be marked by dismal dearth
Of Providence? Shall trivial changes rung
On Time and Sense alone enchant the ears
Of prurient lozels? Shall the creature sit
On his Creator's throne, and all the spheres
Do homage to *his* feeble finite wit?
Shall the vast conscience-woven web of fears
And hopes by ages hallowed be unknit?

LXXXII.—THE COTTAGE.

THE thatch, the gables, and the mantling rose,
Ivy in masses, laurels darkly green
Skirting the lawn, and densely set between
The paddock and the gravel walk, where shows
A brave array of dahlias in rows,
And swans that breast the crystal pond are seen
Through branches of the sycamore; serene
And solid joys those cottage limits close!
Yet chiefly this endears them, that when leaves
Are turned to gold, and grass-blades bead their dew,
And all the shaded picture round receives
A touch of hallowing sunset fond and true,
I sit and think beneath dove-coted eaves
Of those ten happy years which there I knew.

LXXXIII.—MEMINISSE JUVABIT.

WHEN thou descendest in the vale of tears—
As soon or late thou mayest yet descend—
When, losing sight of youth's enchanted years,
Thy dead march moveth towards a bitter end,
And, lest despair prevail, thou need'st a friend
Whose hopeful voice the thorny desert cheers,
And who, when clouds their swarthy bosoms rend,
Points to some light that through the cleft appears;
I counsel thee to treasure in thy breast
A comforter Reverse will not destroy,
To cherish, as thine ever-welcome guest,
The recollected gladness of the boy,
And balance against sorrowful unrest
Thy past experience of ecstatic joy.

LXXXIV.—FERDUSI.

THE gorgeous gates of sandal-wood expand—
The idol temple's gates which Mahmoud bare
From vanquished Somnât—and by his command
Ferdusi, " bard of Paradise," entereth there—
Triumphal singer, who hath filled the air
With verse so sweet in Tûs that all the land
Of Khorassan resoundeth with the rare
Music, and copieth it with deftest hand:
"Ah, trust him not, nor that 'Celestial Bride'
From which he biddeth thee no more depart;
The treacherous Shah will bruise thy honest pride,
Belie his promise, and ignore thy art;
Thy toil of thirty years will be denied
All other guerdon but a nation's heart."

LXXXV.

"FRET NOT THYSELF BECAUSE OF THE UNGODLY."

YOU chafe and fret because the evil reigns;
You sigh and weep because you cannot win
Resplendent sunbeams for the darkling plains,
And rid mankind of turpitude and sin.
Far better didst thou with thyself begin;
Far better chase confusion from thy brains,
And passion from thy bosom, till therein
Thou spare thyself unnumbered needless pains.
The Lord has made the universe His throne;
He rules supreme in every part minute;
It is a tree with ever-varying fruit
And leaf and branch; His will is at the root;
It is an instrument of divers tone,
His lyre; the very discord is His own.*

* Tercets as in Sonnet LXXIV.

LXXXVI.—TRAVELLING.

TRAVEL in thought must outrun that on foot;
Travel, like charity, must begin at home;
And he who starts with treasure on his route
Alone will come back laden, though he roam
From Alpine summit to the Andes' root,
And toss the diamonds of Malaccan foam.
For travellers thus travelled flowers and fruit
Bloom on the sand and ripen in the loam.
We visit sacred rivers; skim the Nile;
The gushing of Scamander's springs explore;
Pursue the green-valed Jordan many a mile
From Hermon to the barren Dead Sea shore;
And pausing on their banks to muse awhile,
See our own faces mirrored—nothing more.

LXXXVII.—SYMPATHY.

"IF any sorrow in my pathway springs,
If any sudden joy my heart dilates,
A certain instinct clothes my heart with wings,
A yearning common to all heaven-linked mates,
And swift I fly to one who ever waits
The slightest rumour of the trivial things
Concerning me, as if it told the fates.
I breathe—to her 'tis as if Calchas sings.
How often (hallowed be such memories) where
The aloes and the cactus thickly grew
Down in our valley, and in dusky air
The countless living gems of fireflies flew,
I told her all my youthful joy and care,
And woke, in every mood, an echo true!"

LXXXVIII.—STOIC OR CHRISTIAN.

"Of all things most ignoble is complaint;
The querulous are stricken by disease;
A healthy soul submits to rude distraint,
And part of discipline is loss of ease.
Life's voyage is not made on summer seas;
Strong hearts, though agonised, disdain to faint;
The well-bred man is easiest to please;
Prosperity has ne'er produced a saint."
Against a pillar of the porch he leaned,
His arms crossed on his breast, while thus he spake.
Who was he, like a Stoic thus demeaned,
And from whose lips these stern reflections brake?
Had Zeno or the Christ his spirit weaned
From living but for self-indulgence' sake?

LXXXIX.—REST.

The boat is hauled upon the hardening sand,
The mist is gathering o'er the dim morass,
The kine are couching on the daisied grass,
And in their stalls the champing coursers stand.
No plash of brine along the darkling strand,
No light winds play the reed-pipes as they pass;
The moonlit deep is glittering like glass,
And all things yield to stilly Night's command.
O balmy hours of silver sheen and dew!
Shall nought belie you save this labouring breast—
The soul alone to Nature be untrue,
And still of what she hath not go in quest?
Just now ye spake. Ah, speak those words anew,
"Wait, weary heart; soon thou shalt also rest."

XC.—UNTHANKFULNESS.

WHAT! not one wandering wind to wake the chord,
When all the land is waking to the spring?
Screams the grey seagull on the fresh seaboard,
And has thy thankless spirit nought to bring,
And add to Nature's solemn offering?
She, steaming incense to her prescient Lord,
Worships the while, and calls on every thing
To praise the Worker in His works adored.
Man only, and of man the nobler part,
In dismal disaccord with Nature's choir,
Or wrapt in ominous silence, grieves the heart
(If aught can grieve them on their platform higher)
Of spirits round us who have learned the art
Of praise without disturbance of desire.

XCI.—PERPETUAL CREATION.

"WHEN did the universe spring forth to light,
And suns and planets first revolve in space?
When did creation's dawn invade the night,
And life and form begin their glorious race?
Fix me the birthday of Time, Matter, Place."
It was but yesterday—nay, while I write
Creation is beginning. Ere I trace
Another line it will have perished quite—
Perished and been renewed: and thus from all
Eternity it has been, and will be.
Ever arising, ever at the fall,
Systems evolve, attain their high degree,
Collapse and change, to manifest once more
Some attributes of God unknown before.

XCII.—THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

If I should never strike a chord again,
Nor pipe for pastime to my musing heart,
To-night, at least, I will awake a strain,
And with Judæan shepherds try my part.
I can but yield the homage of my art.
No costly offerings in my gift remain;
No slaves for me sell produce in the mart;
No ships for me with treasures cross the main;
For me no jewel-case barbaric glows;
For me no camels laden bow the knee:
My gold and frankincense and myrrh are those
Poor songs in which so few will beauty see,
Or count the thoughts and feelings they enclose
As worthy droppings of a Christmas Tree.

XCIII.—ADMIRATION.

Thine admiration marks thee for my friend;
Thou art my brother if thou canst admire;
Thou art the choicest blessing heaven can send;
Thy sparks are sure to kindle into fire;
To truth and knowledge thou must needs aspire
And in pursuit of wisdom know no end.
He who admires not grovels in the mire,
Nor have I faith and love on such to spend.
Give me the eager glance, th' attentive ear,
The mantling glow of juvenile delight,
When novel truths, exciting hope and fear,
Break in their beauty on the inward sight,
Crown us with lordship o'er a conquered sphere,
And wake within a sense of growing might.

XCIV.—THE ALTERED HEART.

"I KNEW a garden; when I found it first
It was so full of sweets—at least for me—
So plenteously its buds and berries burst,
All fragrance, and its gums from every tree
Distilled and offered gluten to the bee—
That I affirmed, whatever else be curst
With cold and barrenness, these plots will be
My balm and refuge when the storm is worst.
And such through many a trying time they were,
Till blight and slime at last e'en there took part,
And toads and snails in long grass made their lair,
And sodden leaves lay rotting for the cart,
And fungi mouldered in the fetid air;—
Alas, that garden was thy altered heart!"

XCV.—IS FAITH OPPOSED TO REASON?

WHAT is the faith the Lord of thee requireth?
To close with that which Reason doth repel?
No process so insane the truth inspireth,
The hackney'd answer is as false as hell.
Faith is the mind's assent to what, if well
Considered, is as clear as heart desireth—
More reasonable than the tongue can tell—
The very fact to which thy hope aspireth.
Faith could not be if Reason's voice said nay.
Faith is not difficult, but winged with ease;
Perplexing doubts are scattered off her way
By Reason's self, who sweeps as with a breeze
The cumbrous mists that round the objects lay,
Till Faith their form with calm observance sees.

XCVI.—THE SPIRITUAL WEALD.

O LORD, I seek Thee in another field
Which erst Thou hadst not opened to my view,
It is from eyes of unbelief concealed,
It is to eyes of faith as plain and true
As any solid thing sense pierces through—
The spiritual body's boundless weald,
Where unto thirst thirst's slaking showers accrue
And seven-sealed scrolls prophetic are unsealed.
The portal of that weald we call the grave;
For, as at noonday in the glowing skies
No star adorns the heavenly architrave,
The soul is dim until its daylight dies.
Go down, dear sun of life, beneath the wave,
And in thy place unnumbered suns shall rise!

XCVII.—SPIRITUAL ORGANISMS.

MY unseen friends! if ye are fraught with zeal
For the stain'd honour of our risen Lord,
If ye, by whom His body is adored
High on its central throne of wondrous weal,
Behold amazed the apathy men feel
In its regard—why sheathe conviction's sword?
Why see the organ of the soul ignored?
Ah, be to your devoted suppliant leal;
And crown his feeble effort with success,
And spread the knowledge of those spirit laws
Our nature scarcely dreams of. Tear away
The veil that overspreads our gaze, and cause
The saints' effulgent forms to burst like May
On lingering winter's stubborn wilderness.*

* Tercets as in Sonnet XIII.

XCVIII.—DEATH'S THREEFOLD LIFE.

YES, not thy soul alone, thy body too—
Dust though it be, and unto dust returning,
And for the cemetery's slumber yearning—
Shall live in countless shapes, be born anew,
Glow in the glint and glitter in the dew,
Active and motive, changing, quickening, burning,
And evermore fresh modes of being learning,
And making death itself a life most true.
But if the denser body lives, much more
The soul's interior substance shall awake
To new experiences, and, like the core
Of some delicious flower or fruit, shall break
Its outer calyx, and evolve a store
Of sweetness spirit growth alone can make.

XCIX.—EVOLUTION.

WHAT matter if we from a polyp came,
And rose through every intervening grade?
Let those who will descent more noble claim,
I am content from nothing to be made,
Nor think less love towards me therein displayed,
Less power and wisdom, than if I could name
A god as ancestor; for such parade
Would but increase, methinks, my parents' shame.
I ask not whence, but whither. If I spring
From lowest germ of matter up to God,
And clothe me sometime with ethereal wing
Immortal, why should I disown the clod
Wherein my earliest glimmering life-spark woke,
And from its shell such evolution broke?

C.—"COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS."

My heart within me was like molten snow;
Wavering and deadly chill. The present seemed
Dark, and the future with grim spectres teemed,
And I had many a weary mile to go
Ere death would close the pilgrimage; and oh,
The fearful thought, What if, still unredeemed,
The sadness should live on? What if there beamed
No dawn upon the midnight walk of woe?
While thus I mused, heart-broken, in the air
I heard a voice cry, "Count thy blessings, count."
And I, ingrate, alarmed, began to bless,
And rise superior to all abject prayer.
Nor has my hymn of praise since then grown less,
For oh how high those mounts of blessing mount!

THE END.

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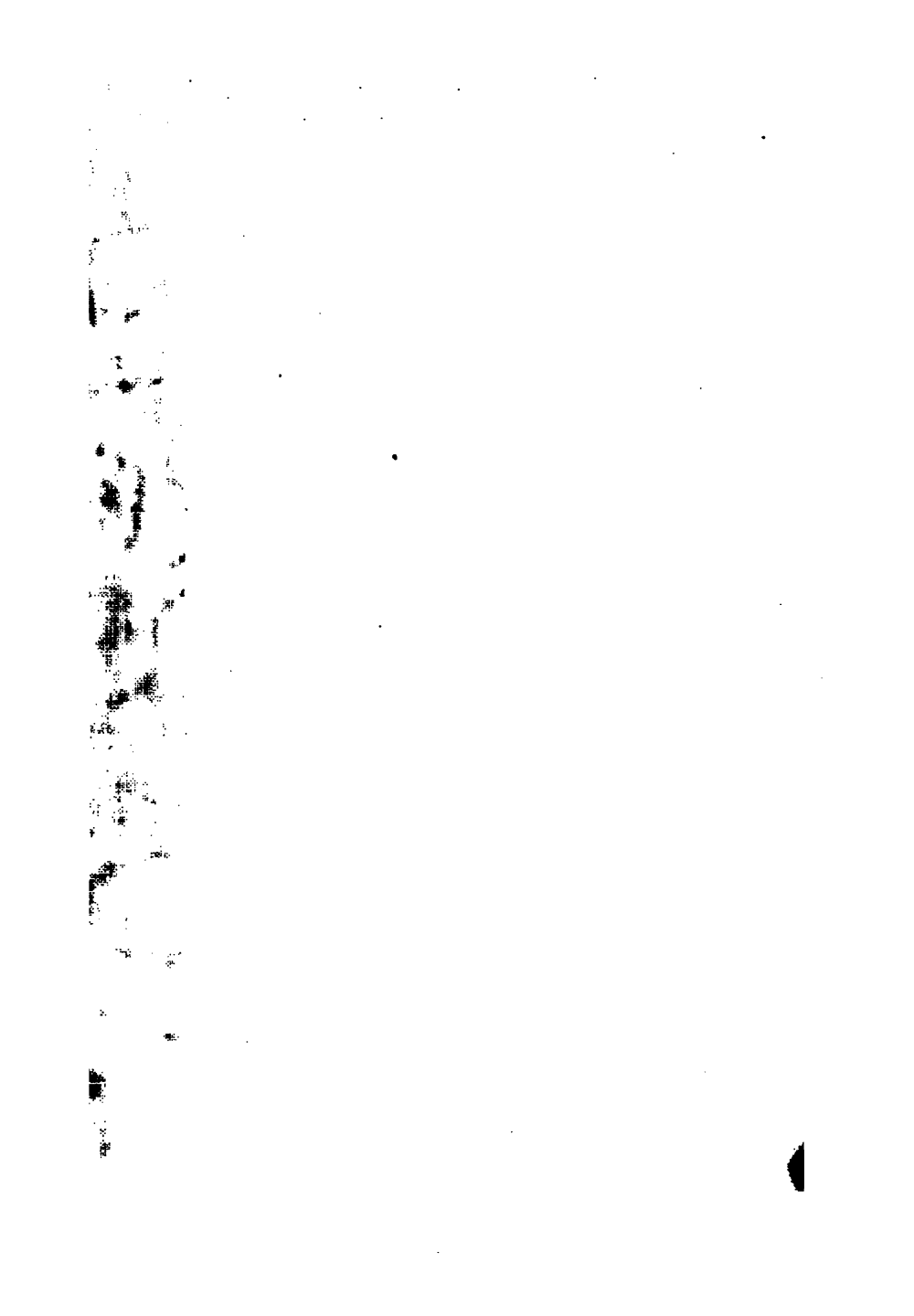

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